THE PLANNING PROCESS

The process of developing an emergency response program begins and ends with the community council. The council must support the idea of emergency planning, provide funding for it, and appoint the members of the emergency planning committee, who initiate the process. When the committee's work is completed, the council will be asked to approve the emergency plan and promulgate it in the form of a community by-law. The plan has no authority until it is embodied in a by-law.

There is no such thing as perfect foresight, and no emergency plan drafted without divine assistance can predict every eventuality. The purpose of the planning process is to produce a realistic assessment of the risks your community faces, and develop a program for emergency responses which will deal with those risks. Those same emergency responses will also enable you to deal effectively with other risks you have not anticipated.

While this guide deals mainly with an emergency plan for a single community, most of the principles apply to planning done by other agencies or institutions, and to a certain extent to emergency planning in business and industry.

The principles also apply to developing emergency plans for regions and counties. While the *Emergency Plans Act* does not give specific authority to counties, it does provide a basis for counties to develop plans with the agreement of the local communities, and counties are encouraged to do so.

Regions may control or co-ordinate an emergency response, while counties play mainly a supporting role. It should be noted that a County Warden is not empowered to declare an emergency or to direct the activities of communities.

It is often helpful for these upper-tier governments to work with their communities to assist with the development of plans, and with ensuring that all of the plans knit smoothly together.

Particularly in the public health and social services fields, where services are administered by the county or region, it is important for both levels of government to work together. This is also often the case where roads and engineering departments are concerned.

The process of developing an emergency plan can be summarized in the 14 steps in the box on the right.

Planning Checklist

1. Form an emergency planning committee, and appoint a co-ordinator
2. Assess the risks
3. Divide the responsibilities between your government and others
4. Compile a directory of resources
5. Develop a notification system
6. Decide who does what in an emergency
7. Develop a management and control structure
8. Design a communications system
9. Integrate community agencies and their plans (police, fire, hospitals, etc.)
10. Write the first draft; circulate it; revise it; write a new draft
11. Test the draft
12. Revise the plan
13. Have it approved by council and promulgated as a by-law
14. Tell the public about it

HOW TO PREPARE AN EMERGENCY PLAN

Fourteen steps
to effective
emergency
planning
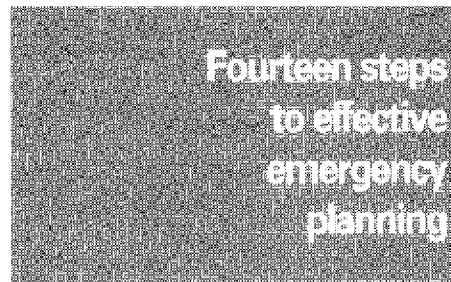
Step 1. Form a Committee

What else? Forming a committee is the first response of any government agency to almost any situation. But in this case it is the right thing to do.

Developing an emergency response apparatus is a complex business and it can not be the work of a single individual, for a number of reasons. The first, obviously enough, is that no single individual has all of the information required to develop an effective emergency plan: in this case two heads — or 10 — are far better than one. The second reason is that effective emergency planning will require close co-operation between a number of agencies. It is easier to get that co-operation if those agencies are involved in the process from the beginning.

Who should be on your committee?

The emergency planning committee should be appointed by the community council, and it should report to the council. It may include a member of council, but it should include:

- a representative of the police
- a representative of the fire department
- a senior official from the community administration
- an official from the public works department
- a representative from the emergency health agencies: the ambulance service, the Medical Officer of Health, hospital authorities;

- a representative of the social services system.

The committee members are not necessarily the chief of each of those agencies; in fact they probably should not be the chief unless there is no other suitable candidate. But they should report directly to the chief, and have the support of the chief.

The members of the committee should also be convinced of the need for emergency planning. They will be the principal supporters of the emergency plan when it is presented to the community council and the public, and they should be aware of the risks the community faces and the benefits of a well thought-out emergency response procedure.

Avoid the temptation to make the planning committee too large. A better strategy is to develop a support group which can provide expertise and assistance on specific topics as needed. The support group might include representatives from

- major industries, especially those which may pose a potential hazard
- public or private utilities: the gas company, the local telephone office, the public utilities commission
- school boards
- hospitals
- the airport management agency
- volunteer agencies like the Red Cross, St. John Ambulance, the Salvation Army, local ham radio clubs, etc.
- other emergency health services
- provincial government ministries

where applicable (for example, the Ministry of Natural Resources)
- transportation companies
- suppliers of equipment
- anyone else who can make a contribution.

The committee's first action will probably be to appoint a chairperson to co-ordinate the committee's work and supervise the planning process. This should normally be a senior official — elected or appointed — of the community: often the clerk or deputy clerk, an elected member of council, or other senior official. Some communities have a full-time emergency planning co-ordinator; others assign the responsibility to a community employee, either instead of his or her other duties or in addition to them.
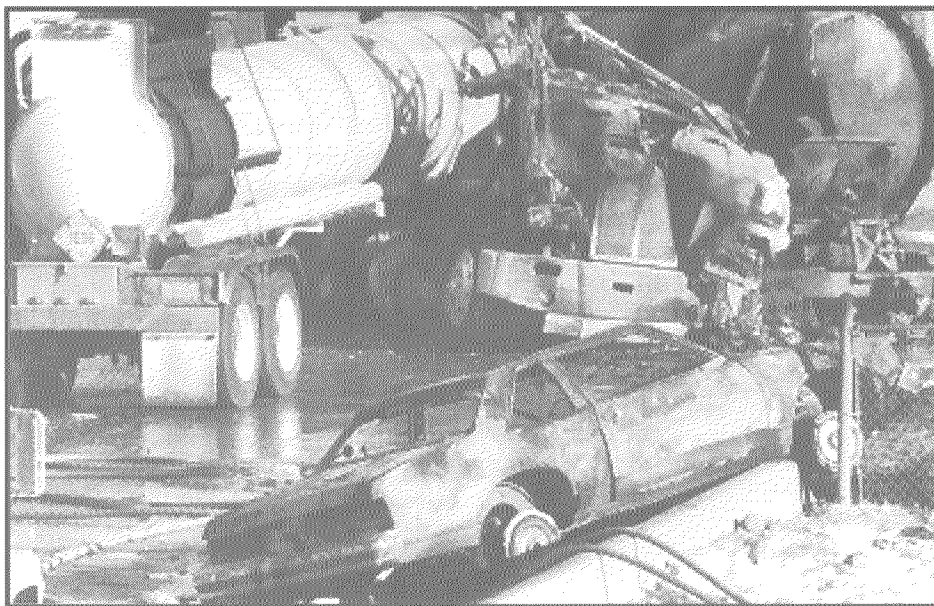
The individual chosen should be of sufficient stature to gain co-operation from the various agencies involved in the planning process, and capable of winning support for the emergency plan when it is completed. He or she should also have enough time to devote to the committee's work; while this will not be a full-time position, it will be time consuming.

Step 2. Identify the risks

Assessing the risks your community faces is the beginning of emergency preparedness. The list of possible contingencies on page 2 may help, but the real work in this process involves assessing the circumstances and facilities of your community, and trying to foresee the probable effects of something going seriously wrong. The process consists of looking around — at the industries operating in or near your community, for example — and asking: "what would we do if ...?"

Typically, this type of risk assessment will indicate that some aspects of the emergency plan will require a generalized response which is more-or-less the same in all circumstances. In addition there may be a limited number of "scenarios" in which more specialized responses are required: the existence of a local industry using hazardous materials, for example, or recurrent floods or other dangerous weather patterns. Both generalized and specific responses should be provided for in your emergency plan.

There are two caveats. First, try to keep your speculations realistic: don't worry about an atomic bomb dropping on city hall (that's a federal responsibility anyway); worry instead about a tanker truck that overturns and allows dangerous chemicals to escape into the water supply or the atmosphere. Second, understand that the point of this exercise is not to anticipate every possible risk, but to develop systematic procedures that will provide an effective response both to the emergencies you have foreseen and those you haven't.

Every community has risks that are specific to it; your job is to identify those risks and provide the basis for dealing with them.

Risk assessment has a secondary benefit: it is very convincing. It

Try to keep your risk assessment realistic. You are much more likely to suffer from a spill of hazardous materials than from a nuclear accident.

makes the need for sound emergency planning obvious to everyone involved in it.

Step 3. Co-operate with other agencies

Your community government is responsible for responding first to an emergency, using its own resources. But help is available. All regional governments in Ontario, and many county governments, have emergency plans in place which allocate responsibility for specific functions. The plan developed by your community should fit within the county or regional plan. In addition, provincial emergency plans exist to deal with specific contingencies — nuclear accidents, for example.

One of the major benefits of emergency planning is that it encourages the sharing of resources among neighbours, and normally the regional plan is the method of organizing this process.

If no county plan exists, start agitating to have one prepared. It will benefit your community directly.

Step 4. Compile a resource directory.

Emergency preparedness usually doesn't involve buying new equipment specifically for emergency response purposes; instead it focuses on making the best use of existing resources. You probably can't use the emergency plan as the justification for buying a new helicopter. Sorry.

However, if somebody in your community already has a helicopter, the resource directory should show you where to find it. The directory is an essential component of every emergency plan. It tells you where to find a helicopter or a front-end loader — or anything else — when you need one urgently.

Your resource directory should list everything and everyone you are likely to need in an emergency, and a means of reaching them around the clock. The list on this page shows

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Typical Resource Directory

Your resource directory should included business and residence telephone numbers for contacts at the following agencies and organizations — and others.

Airports	Divers and Diving Equipment	Media - print and broadcast
Air Services	Doctors	Pharmacies
Ambulances	Elected Officials (community, provincial and federal)	Radio Operators - clubs, individuals, organizations
Auxiliary Lighting Equipment		
Boats	Fire Departments	Red Cross
Bus Services	Food Supplies	Salvation Army
Caterers	Fuel Dealers	School Boards
Chemicals	Funeral Homes	Taxis
Children's Aid Society	Heavy Equipment suppliers or users	Telephone Company
Churches		Towing Companies
Consumers Gas	Helicopter Services	Trans Canada Pipelines
Coroner	Health Services	Utilities
CNR	Hospitals	Volunteer Agencies
CPR	Hydro	Welding Services
	Meteorological Office	

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typical entries. Your initial risk assessment should also suggest others. And of course you realize that keeping the directory current is absolutely essential; it should be checked and up-dated at least once every year.

Step 5. Develop a notification system

One of the reasons communities have the principal responsibility for emergency response is that they are usually the first to hear about the crisis of the moment. It is the community fire department, or police, or ambulance service — or all three — who respond first.

When a situation requires an extraordinary response, the responsibility for co-ordinating that response will fall to the Community Control Group, (see page 4). The Community Control Group is an extension of the committee responsible for developing the emergency plan (in fact one of the committee's responsibilities is determining who will be part of the control group) and it is important to notify the members promptly in the event of an emergency. Early recognition of a developing emergency, and fast and effective responses depend on an effective notification system.

That notification procedure can be something as simple as a telephone call to each member of the control group (or alternate, and there should be an alternate for each member). You should also plan for a back-up notification procedure, to be followed if the telephones are out of

commission. This may involve using radio, or personal notification by the police or fire department. In any event a formal procedure must be established to assign responsibility for making sure the control group is convened when it is needed. The procedure should indicate who may activate the notification process and who will make the calls.

The table shows a typical notification system.

Step 6. Decide who does what.

The principal function of a plan is provide a blueprint for emergency responses. Part of that blueprint involves assigning responsibility for various aspects of the emergency.

Usually those responsibilities parallel the normal functions of the members of the Community Control Group. For instance the senior police official involved in emergency planning co-ordinates the responses of the police — for example, crowd or traffic control.

Step 7. Develop a management and control structure.

The management and control structure will be the Community Control Group mentioned in Step 5, and an Emergency Site Manager (see page 21). The membership of the control group parallels the membership of the emergency planning committee, plus the head of council or designated alternate.

An emergency can only be declared by the Head of Council or a designated alternate. Once an emergency is declared, the author-

Emergency Notification Procedure

Responsibility for notifying members of the Community Control Group of an emergency is assigned to an agency like the Fire Department with 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week capability. The decision to notify the control group requires an official notice from any of the members marked with this symbol †.

1. Head of Council †
2. Fire Chief †
3. Police Chief †
4. Engineering official †
5. Administrative official †
6. Health official †
7. Social services official

Members are called in the order shown. Alternates are to be called only if the primary member can not be contacted. Members and alternates must notify the alerting agency of any change in business or residence phone numbers.